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ABSTRACT

Experienced elementary teachers (N=98) described their general strategies for coping with failure syndrome students and told how they would handle incidents depicted in two vignettes portraying failure syndrome problems at school. Compared to their responses concerning some of the other problem student types addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study, the teachers were unusually confident about their abilities to intervene successfully with failure syndrome students. They tended to mention similar response strategies featuring a combination of support, encouragement, demands for improved persistence, and task assistance designed to shape better work habits through successive approximations. These stratagies for responding to failure syndrome problems reported by most teachers were well matched to the strategies supported by the research literature. However, teachers were not familiar with cognitive modeling as a method for teaching students better coping strategies, nor with the importance of teaching them to persist in the face of frustration or failure rather than just programming them for success. (Author/JD)

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Research Series No. 197

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH FAILURE SYNDROME STUDENTS

Jere Brophy
(with Mary Rohrkemper)

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Abstract

Experienced elementary (K-6) teachers nominated by their principals as either outstanding or average at dealing with problem students described their general strategies for coping with failure syndrome students and told how they would handle incidents depicted in two vignettes portraying failure syndrome problems at school. Transcripts of these responses were coded and analyzed for general trends and group differences. Compared to their responses concerning some of the other problem student types addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study, the teachers were unusually confident about their abilities to intervene successfully with failure syndrome students. They tended to mention similar response strategies featuring a combination of support, encouragement, demands for improved persistence, and task assistance designed to shape better work habits through successive approximations.

Most higher rated teachers gave more systematic and elaborate descriptions of how this general strategy would be implemented. Most lower rated teachers spoke in briefer and vaguer terms but along the same general lines of approach to the problem, although some either mentioned support and encouragement but not improvement demands or else mentioned making improvement demands but not providing reassurance and assistance in helping the student to meet those demands. As far as they went, the strategies for responding to failure syndrome problems reported by most teachers were well matched to the strategies supported by the research literature. However, teachers were not familiar with cognitive modeling as a method for teaching students better coping strategies, nor with the importance of teaching them to persist in the face of frustration or failure rather than just programming them for success.

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH FAILURE SYNDROME STUDENTS

Jere Brophy (with Mary Rohrkemper)[1]

This report provides information about elementary grade (K-6) teachers' reported strategies for coping with students who are chronic underachievers due to low self-concept/failure syndrome/learned helplessness problems. This is one of 12 types of problem students addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988), a large-scale investigation of elementary school teachers' perceptions of and reported strategies for coping with problem students (students who present chronic problems involving unsatisfactory achievement, personal adjustment, or classroom behavior). Information about strategies for coping with 10 of the problem student types (underachiever due to perfectionism, underachiever due to alienation, low achiever, passive-aggressive, defiant, hyperactive, distractible, immature, shy/withdrawn, and rejected by peers) will be given in other reports currently in preparation. The remaining type, hostile-aggressive, is discussed in Brophy and Rohrkemper (1987).

Failure Syndrome Students

Under ideal conditions, the instructional aspects of schooling would be accomplished mainly through individualized tutoring. The starting place for

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instruction would be matched to the students' current knowledge and readiness, and forward progress from there would occur at a brisk but individualized pace continually adjusted to produce steady growth with minimal confusion or frustration. Given a skilled and supportive tutor, the student's learning experience would be primarily positive, rewarding, and nonthreatening.

Unfortunately, fiscal realities preclude this kind of schooling except for the very rich. Unlike private tutors, classroom teachers must attempt to meet the learning needs of 20 to 30 or more students simultaneously, working under conditions that minimize opportunities for individualized curriculum and instruction. Typically, this means teaching the class primarily as a whole group and trying to keep it together, pitching the level of difficulty toward the average-ability students and individualizing to just a minor degree by assigning special projects or enrichment work to high-ability students and by reducing demands on or supplying extra and more individualized attention to low achievers. As a result, low achievers typically have a difficult time keeping up with their classmates. Some manage to do so but only by constantly struggling against more frustration and failure than is good for them, while others are unable or unwilling to keep up and gradually settle into a pattern of consistent failure.

Among these students who show unsatisfactory achievement progress, four subtypes have been identified for focus in the Classroom Strategy Study: low achievers and three types of underachievers. Low achievers are students who make limited progress because of limited ability or readiness rather than because of motivation problems (although motivation problems are likely to develop in most such students if they continually experience failure and frustration). Low achievers' progress is satisfactory (in one sense at least) given their limited abilities--it reflects the level of success that can be expected from them given reasonable effort. In contrast, underachievers work below

expectations based on what is known about their abilities. Some students underachieve because of low self-concept/failure syndrome/learned helplessness reasons: They become so defeated by failure and frustration that they eventually just give up serious learning efforts. Others underachieve because of neurotic perfectionism: They are more concerned about avoiding mistakes than about learning, so that they are inhibited about classroom participation and counterproductively compulsive in their work habits. Finally, some students underachieve due to alienation: They hate school or at least see no value in what is taught there, so they do not take academic activities seriously or try to do their best on them. This report presents the findings concerning failure syndrome students; other reports will present the findings on low achievers, perfectionists, and alienated underachievers.

Varieties and Causes of Failure Syndrome

"Failure syndrome" is one of several terms that teachers commonly use (others include "low self-concept," "defeated," and "frustrated") to describe students who approach learning activities and assignments with very low expectations of success and who tend to give up at the first sign of difficulty or failure. Psychologists have given the term "learned helplessness" a slightly more technical definition, but it refers to the same general pattern of behavior. Unlike low achievers, who often fail despite their best efforts, failure syndrome students often fail needlessly because they do not invest their best efforts--they begin the task half-heartedly and simply give up when they encounter difficulty. Butkowsky and Willows (1980), for example, observed the following characteristics in students who showed learned helplessness tendencies when confronted with challenging reading tasks: (a) low initial expectancies for success on the tasks, (b) tendency to give up quickly in the face of difficulty, (c) tendency to attribute failure to uncontrollable causes (lack of

ability) rather than to controllable causes (insufficient effort or reliance on an inappropriate strategy), (d) tendency to attribute successes to external and uncontrollable causes (luck, easy task) rather than to their own abilities and efforts, and (e) greater decrements (compared to those seen in other students) in their subjective estimates of future success probabilities following failure.

Some students, especially in the early grades, show failure syndrome tendencies as part of larger patterns of emotional immaturity (low frustration tolerance, avoidance, inhibition, or adult dependency reactions to stress). They may focus more on dependency-related desires for attention from the teacher than on trying to learn what an academic activity is designed to teach. Others may display the pattern of learned helplessness and dependency that Adlerian theory (Dreikurs, 1968) describes as a defense mechanism. This pattern is exhibited by some children (especially youngest children) who feel unable to compete with successful siblings, who have been pampered to the point that they lack experience of and confidence in their own abilities, or who for whatever reason have developed failure expectations and low self-concepts of ability.

Other failure syndrome students may have originally acquired failure expectations and low self-concepts of ability in response to communications from their parents or teachers. Parents sometimes either tell their children directly or lead them to believe indirectly that school will be difficult and frustrating for them or that they have only limited academic potential. This is especially likely to occur in response to the child's first report cards, if these contain low grades (Entwisle & Hayduk, 1982). At school, teachers may communicate low expectations to students through a variety of direct and indirect means (Brophy, 1983, Dusek, 1985). This is especially likely to occur if the child is formally diagnosed and assigned a label such as "learning impaired."

Whether or not the previously described family dynamics or self-fulfilling prophecy effects are present as contributing factors, most failure syndrome students develop their problematic behavior through social learning mechanisms centered around their experiences with failure. Most children look forward to beginning school and do so with enthusiasm, but many soon find the experience anxiety provoking and psychologically threatening. As students, they are accountable for responding to teachers' questions, completing assignments, and taking tests. Furthermore, their performance will be monitored, graded, and reported to their parents. Such continuing accountability for meeting performance demands might be a tolerable burden under conditions of privacy and consistent success with reasonable effort, but it is much more threatening in the typical classroom situation where failure carries the danger of humiliation before the peer group (because performance in class is public and because grades on assignments and tests often become public), especially for students who fail frequently. The public aspects of classroom performance cause students not only to monitor their own personal progress but to compare themselves with their peers, and this magnifies the perceived importance and thus the emotional impact of failures.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that some students, especially those who have experienced either a continuing history of failure or a recent progressive cycle of failure (either in general or in particular subject matter areas or types of tasks) will begin to believe that they lack the ability needed to succeed and thus will not be able to succeed no matter how hard they try. Once these perceptions take root, they distract the student's attention from concentration on the task and replace it with anxiety, fear of failure, and related emotions and defense mechanisms. Failure expectations and other self-conscious thoughts begin to invade working memory and limit coping abilities, and eventually such students abandon serious attempts to master the

task and begin to concentrate instead on preserving their self-esteem in their own eyes and their reputations in the eyes of others (Ames, 1987; Butkowsky & Willows, 1980; Clifford, 1984; Rohrkemper & Corno, 1988; Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Phillips, 1984).

Among such failure patterns, Dweck and Elliott (1983) distinguished learned helplessness from high evaluation anxiety. In their formulation, the latter is a more generalized and chronic state, developed in response to repeated experiences with failure or unrealistically high imposed expectations. High evaluation anxiety is characterized by anxiety and low expectations/fear of failure triggered by evaluative cues (e.g., discovering that one will be required to perform and that the performance will be evaluated). In contrast, learned helplessness is a more acute and situational response to negative outcomes that is characterized by plunging expectancies in the face of perceived failure. Dweck and Elliott noted that students who suffer from generalized evaluation anxiety in school tend to be low achievers who experience failure routinely, whereas students who develop learned helplessness reactions do not differ systematically from their classmates in academic ability. Nor do they typically develop high anxiety in response to evaluation cues or begin tasks with failure expectations. As long as they do not question their ability to succeed, learned helplessness students may be able to handle classroom activities smoothly and successfully. However, these students are prone to show "catastrophic" reactions when they encounter serious frustration or failure, and they show progressive deterioration in the quality of their coping once they have begun to fail.

In contrast to students who view intellectual ability as a repertoire of skills that can be increased incrementally through effort (so that one can develop the ability to do something through working at it even if one does not possess the ability now), learned helplessness students view intellectual

ability as a global and stable entity that one possesses to a fixed degree. Therefore, they view failure at a particular task as a sign that they lack ability to succeed at that kind of task, and they respond to such failure by giving up rather than by seeking to overcome it through increased efforts or development of more effective problem-solving strategies.

Suggested Strategies for Coping with Failure Syndrome Students

Common sense suggests that failure syndrome students need assistance in regaining self-confidence in their academic abilities and in developing strategies for coping with failure and persisting in seeking task solutions even when difficulties are encountered. These goals are prominently featured in works on motivation and educational psychology.

Wlodkowski (1978), for example, suggested that teachers respond to failure syndrome students by (a) guaranteeing that they will experience success in their learning efforts (by segmenting instruction into units that allow for easy monitoring of progress, giving clear instructions and making sure that students know what to do before being asked to do it independently, providing immediate and specific feedback to their responses, and making sure that they know the criteria by which their learning will be evaluated); (b) encouraging their learning efforts and progress (by giving recognition for real effort, showing appreciation for progress, and projecting positive expectations and faith in the student as a general learner); (c) emphasizing the student's personal causation in his or her learning (by allowing the student to plan and set goals, make choices, and use self-evaluation procedures to check progress, and by negotiating commitments or contracts that call for the student to pledge to make serious efforts to reach agreed-upon goals); and (d) using group process methods to enhance positive self-concepts (activities that emphasize the worth of each

individual and orient students toward appreciating their positive qualities and getting feedback about these qualities from their peers).

Similarly, Good and Brophy (1986, 1987) suggested (a) programming students for success and calling their attention to such success as it is achieved; (b) providing sufficient task structuring and assistance to ensure that students are clear about what to do and likely to be able to do it successfully if they invest reasonable effort; (c) teaching goal setting, performance appraisal, and self-reinforcement skills; and (d) helping students to recognize linkages between their efforts and their learning outcomes and to attribute successful outcomes to the combination of sufficient ability with reasonable effort. For particularly discouraged students, they recommended the attribution retraining approaches described below as well as mastery learning approaches that virtually guarantee success and thus build confidence and increase willingness to take the risks involved in seriously committing oneself to challenging goals (see Grabe, 1985).

More specific and elaborated suggestions have emerged from research and development efforts surrounding particular theoretical concepts or treatment approaches. Many of these involve what Ames (1987) has called "cognition retraining." Three of the more prominent approaches to cognition retraining are attribution retraining, efficacy training, and strategy training.

Attribution retraining involves inducing changes in failure syndrome/learned helplessness students' tendencies to attribute failure to lack of ability rather than to insufficient effort, reliance on an inappropriate strategy, or some other remediable cause. The scope of these approaches and the specifics included within them vary across investigators and have evolved somewhat over time. Typically, however, attribution retraining treatments involve exposing students to a planned series of experiences, couched within an achievement context, in which they are given modeling, socialization, practice, and

feedback designed to teach them to (a) concentrate on the task at hand rather than worry about failure when engaged in academic activities, (b) cope by retracing their steps to find their mistake or by analyzing the problem to find another approach rather than giving up in the face of failure, and (c) attribute their failures to insufficient effort, lack of information, or reliance on ineffective strategies rather than to lack of ability (Andrews & Debus, 1978; Chapin & Dyck, 1976; Craske, 1985; Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Fowler & Peterson, 1981; Kennelly, Dietz, & Benson, 1985; Medway & Venino, 1982; Relich, Debus, & Walker, 1986; Shelton, Anastopoulos, & Linden, 1985; Thomas & Pashley, 1982; Tollefson, Tracy, Johnsen, Farmer, & Buenning, 1984).

This line of work represents a significant advance over the commonsense emphasis on programming students for success because it has shown that success alone is not enough--even a steady diet of success will not change an established pattern of learned helplessness (Dweck & Elliott, 1983). In fact, a key ingredient to successful attribution retraining programs is controlled exposure to failure (combined with instruction in strategies for coping with such failure constructively). Rather than being exposed only to "success models" who handle the task with ease, students in attribution retraining programs are exposed to "coping models" who struggle to overcome confusion or mistakes before finally succeeding, and who model constructive responses to such confusion or mistakes as they occur (by verbalizing continued confidence and calm persistence in the face of difficulties, attributing failures to remediable causes, and coping by diagnosing the sources of the problem and responding by correcting mistakes or approaching the problem in a different way). Following exposure to such modeling, the students begin to work on the tasks themselves. Conditions are arranged so that they will sometimes (perhaps one-fourth of the time) experience difficulty or failure, and the instructor's comments and

feedback will encourage them to respond constructively rather than becoming frustrated and giving up.

These developments involving controlled exposure to failure experiences and instruction in constructive response to failure during attribution retraining programs are part of a more generally developing recognition that successful student socialization will include attention to frustration tolerance, task persistence in the face of difficulties, and related aspects of constructive response to failure, rather than trying to avoid failure experiences altogether on the grounds that such experiences are necessarily bad for children (Clifford, 1984; Rohrkemper & Corno, 1988).

The modeling, instructions, and feedback included in early attribution retraining programs stressed attribution of failure to insufficient effort (I failed because I didn't try hard enough or concentrate carefully enough) rather than to insufficient ability (I failed because I lack the abilities needed to succeed on this task). More recently, however, attribution retraining programs have reduced their emphasis on attribution of failure to insufficient effort in favor of training students to attribute failure to reliance on an ineffective strategy (I failed because I went about the problem in the wrong way, because I misunderstood the directions, because I unknowingly made a mistake at a certain point that negated my efforts thereafter, etc.). This is in recognition of the fact that most students at least subjectively put forth their best efforts in trying to overcome problems encountered when working on assignments, so that failure results not so much from lack of effort as from a limited repertoire of relevant knowledge and coping strategies (i.e., they do everything they know how to do but still don't succeed, and they lack the knowledge or skills needed to diagnose and overcome the problem on their own). For the same reason, remediation efforts with failure syndrome students often combine attribution retraining with strategy training (described below).

Similar to attribution retraining programs in many ways are efficacy training programs, which also involve exposing students to a planned set of experiences within an achievement context and providing them with modeling, instruction, and feedback. The main differences are that attribution retraining programs were developed specifically for learned helplessness students and thus focus on teaching constructive response to failure experiences, whereas efficacy training programs were developed primarily for low achievers who have become accustomed to failure and have developed generalized low self-concepts of ability, so they focus on training students to set realistic goals and pursue them with the recognition that they have the ability (efficacy) needed to reach those goals if they apply reasonable effort.

Efficacy training programs were developed based on Bandura's theorizing about the role of self-efficacy perceptions in determining effort investment and performance levels in achievement tasks (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Various elements of efficacy training have been tested in a series of experiments by Schunk. In a summary and synthesis article, Schunk (1985) identified the following educational practices as effective for increasing students' self-efficacy perceptions (and indirectly, their task persistence and achievement levels): (a) cognitive modeling that includes verbalization of the strategies for accomplishing academic tasks, along with statements of self-confidence in eventual success, intentions to persist despite problems, and so forth. (b) explicit training in strategies for accomplishing the task; (c) performance feedback provided during and after the task that points out correct operations, remedies troublesome task aspects, and most importantly, reassures students that they are making progress and developing mastery; (d) attributional feedback that emphasizes the successes being achieved and attributes these to a combination of ability and effort (the student has the ability needed to succeed on the task and will succeed with reasonable effort);

(e) encouraging students to set goals prior to working on tasks (particularly goals that are challenging but attainable, phrased in terms of specific performance standards, and oriented toward immediate short-term outcomes); (f) focusing feedback on how students' present performance surpasses their prior attainments rather than on how they compare with other students; and (g) supplying rewards contingent upon actual accomplishment (not just task participation).

The third general approach mentioned by Ames (1987) is strategy training, in which modeling and instruction are used to teach children problem-solving strategies and associated self-talk that they will need to handle tasks successfully. Unlike attribution retraining and efficacy training, strategy training is emphasized as a component of good instruction that would be useful in teaching cognitive skills and strategies to all students; it is not primarily a remedial technique for students who do not cope with failure constructively or who need to develop a more positive self-concept of ability. However, strategy training is especially important for use with low-achieving and frustrated students who are less likely than other students to develop effective learning and problem-solving strategies on their own but who can learn them efficiently through modeling and explicit instruction.

Poor readers, for example, have been taught reading comprehension strategies such as identifying the purpose of the assignment and keeping it in mind when reading, activating relevant background knowledge, identifying major points and attending to the general outline and flow of content, monitoring one's understanding by generating and attempting to answer questions about the content, and drawing and testing inferences by making interpretations, predictions, and conclusions (Duffy & Roehler, in press; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Paris, Cross, & Lipson, 1984; Raphael, 1984). Two keys to the effectiveness of such strategy training are (a) the training includes attention not just to propositional knowledge (principles or statements about what to do), but also

to procedural knowledge (how to do it) and conditional knowledge (when and why to do it) and (b) the training includes extensive modeling (e.g., thinking out loud) that makes visible the usually covert thought processes that guide problem solving and allows the students to see them being used within problem-solving contexts.

In addition to training students in strategies for use in particular subject matter areas such as reading comprehension, programs have been developed for training students in general study skills (Devine, 1981) and in general learning strategies such as rehearsal (actively repeating or focusing attention on key material so as to remember it more effectively), elaboration (putting material into one's own words and relating it to prior knowledge), organization (outlining or organizing material to highlight its structure and help one to remember it), comprehension monitoring (keeping track of the strategies that one uses and the degree of success achieved with them, and adjusting behavior accordingly), and maintenance of appropriate affect (maintaining concentration and task focus, minimizing performance anxiety and fear of failure) [Good & Brophy, 1986; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986]. The affective management components that have been suggested for inclusion in general strategy training programs (McCombs, 1984; Rohrkemper & Bershon, 1984; Rohrkemper & Corno, 1988) are similar to those included in attribution retraining and efficacy training programs, underscoring once again that a comprehensive cognition retraining approach, at least if used with failure syndrome students, will include attention to both the cognitive and the affective aspects of task engagement and persistence.

Ames (1987) noted that the cognitive retraining approaches discussed so far (attribution retraining, efficacy training, and strategy training) are all oriented toward individual students and do not take into account the social aspects of the classroom and the reward structures that are in effect there.

Citing research findings that an emphasis on competition and social comparison will increase performance anxiety and thus the failure syndrome/learned helplessness problems associated with it, Ames (1987) argued that an important preventive and remedial step that teachers can take with regard to such motivation problems is to deemphasize competition and social comparison in their classrooms. Consequently, she recommended that teachers avoid such practices as publicly grading on a curve or posting students' achievement scores, that they emphasize private rather than public feedback, and that they phrase such feedback in terms of progress beyond the individual's own previous levels rather than in terms of comparisons with classmates. Brophy (1981) suggested similar guidelines in discussing teacher praise.

A few other points that elaborate on the treatment suggestions reviewed so far are worth mentioning. Dweck and Elliott (1983) argued that students who have developed an entity view of ability (seeing it as fixed and limited) stand to benefit from direct training designed to shift them to an incremental view (seeing it as something that develops through practice on tasks). This factor becomes more important with grade level, because children increasingly adopt an entity view of ability as they develop through the elementary school years. Similarly, Clifford (1984) argued the value of creating expectancies not merely for success on particular tasks but for more generalized levels of performance improvement as abilities are learned and solidified. Rohrkemper & Corno (1988) argued that teachers should provide both support and challenge/push to failure syndrome students, not merely ensure their consistent success by lowering levels of demand.

Dweck and Elliott (1983) identified the following as parental practices that could create failure syndrome/learned helplessness problems: unreasonably high or rigid expectations for children, intrusive provision of overly direct or specific help on tasks that children might be able to do on their own or

with only more general assistance, an emphasis on criticism for mistakes rather than on praise for progress, and the use of normative standards for judgment (comparing the child with others). This implies that teachers might caution parents against such practices if they become aware that parents use them frequently. Dweck and Elliot also identified general teacher behaviors that would be expected in the classrooms of teachers who favor incremental rather than entity views of ability: acting more as resource persons than as judges, focusing students more on learning processes than on outcomes, reacting to errors as natural and useful parts of the learning process rather than as evidence of failure (and frequently responding to errors by providing opportunities to improve one's response, along with clues and strategy suggestions), stressing effort and personal standards over ability and normative standards when giving feedback, and attempting to stimulate achievement efforts through primarily intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivational strategies.

Finally, additional approaches to cognitive restructuring with failure syndrome students have been developed as part of rational emotive education (Knaus, 1974), which is a classroom application of the principles of rational emotive therapy developed by Albert Ellis (1977). Rational emotive education focuses on identifying and eliminating underlying irrational beliefs or expectations that cause students to behave inappropriately. The key irrational beliefs involved in failure syndrome/learned helplessness problems are "catastrophic" reactions to failure ("I'm not getting it--I can't do it--there's no use in trying"). Once such irrational themes are identified, the teacher challenges, questions, and logically analyzes them with the student in order to replace them with more rational ones. In the case of failure syndrome students, the teacher would work to replace "catastrophic" reactions with the perception that such errors are a natural and expected part of the learning process, that deeper understanding and improved performance can be expected with

persistent efforts, and so on. Obviously, these rational emotive education procedures have much in common with the attribution retraining and efficacy training approaches described above. They differ mainly in their emphasis on labeling catastrophic reactions to failure as irrational and persuading the student to replace them with more productive responses.

This concludes our review of the literature on failure syndrome students. We now present our findings on teachers' perceptions of and reported strategies for coping with these students.

Classroom Strategy Study: Design and Data Collection Procedures

The Classroom Strategy Study was not an experiment but a systematic gathering of self-report data from experienced elementary teachers who varied in grade level, types of students taught, and rated effectiveness at dealing with problem students. Teachers who had been nominated by their principals as either outstanding or average in ability to cope with problem students responded to interviews and vignettes designed to elicit their attitudes and beliefs about 12 types of problem students and their strategies for coping with the problems that each type presents. Responses were transcribed and coded, yielding scores reflecting the teachers' reported beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and coping strategies. The scores were then analyzed to yield two general types of information: descriptive data indicating the frequency of each response in the sample of teachers as a whole and in subsamples differing by grade level and geographic location, and correlational data indicating relationships between interview or vignette responses and ratings of the teachers' effectiveness in coping with problem students. Taken together, these data describe the strategies currently used by teachers for coping with problem students in their classes and provide suggestive (correlational) information about the relative effectiveness of these strategies.

Source and Nature of Data

The teachers were presented with descriptions of key personal characteristics and behaviors of commonly encountered problem student types and with vignettes depicting incidents of the troublesome behavior that such students present. The teachers were asked to describe their general strategies for responding to each type of problem student and their specific strategies for responding to the incidents depicted in the vignettes.

The data are self-report and thus open to memory failure and distortion, social desirability responding, and all of the other threats to reliability and validity that are involved in asking people to report on their own behavior (Ericcson & Simon, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). However, several features were built into the study to guard against such problems. First, experienced teachers were asked open-ended questions about familiar aspects of their work that usually had involved some prior conscious thinking and decision making. Second, the teachers were asked open-ended questions and encouraged to speak at length in their own words (rather than to choose among fixed alternatives). Self-report data tend to be largely accurate when people are asked about familiar matters that they have experienced and thought about and when they are allowed to respond in their own words (Ericcson & Simon, 1980; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Finally, the teachers were asked first to describe their strategies ("what they would say and do") and second to explain "why" they would respond in this way. Thus, the interview structure encouraged them to disentangle their responses to students from their rationales and justifications for those responses. This procedure likely enhances the validity of the self-report of strategies (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

The Teachers

All teachers interviewed were regular classroom teachers (i.e., not resource room teachers or other specialists) with at least three years of experience. Most taught in self-contained age-graded classrooms, although a few taught in team teaching or semi-departmentalized arrangements. Of the 98 teachers, 54 taught in the public schools of a small city, and 44 in the inner-city public schools of one of the nation's largest cities. Both cities are in the midwest (they will be referred to as Small City and Big City). Small City's schools are representative in many ways of the schools in the nation at large. Major employers in the area include the state government, a major university, and several automobile parts and assembly plants, so Small City has a diversified economy that provides a variety of white collar and blue collar jobs. The majority (over 60%) of its students are Anglos, but there are significant black (25%) and Hispanic (10%) minorities, as well as smaller percentages of Asians and Native Americans. Many of the minority students attended naturally integrated schools, although some were bused from areas of concentrated minority residence to schools in predominantly Anglo neighborhoods.

Small City does not contain an extensive economically depressed area, so that it does not have "inner-city schools." Yet, the need for information about coping with problem students appears to be greatest at such schools, and it is possible that the strategies that work most effectively in inner-city schools differ from the strategies that work best elsewhere. These considerations led us to include the inner-city schools of Big City as a second site for data collection. Within Big City, we worked in three districts that served the most economically depressed inner-city areas. The vast majority of students attending these schools were from black families and most were poor. Readers should bear in mind that, although we refer to the "Big City" subsample

when reporting the results, this subsample was confined to inner-city schools and thus is not representative of the Big City school system as a whole.

In summary, the 98 teachers included 54 in Small City and 44 in the inner-city schools of Big City. The Small City subsample contained 28 teachers in the lower grades (K-3) and 26 in the upper grades (4-6), of whom 7 were male and 47 were female. The Big City subsample included 22 teachers in the lower grades and 22 in the upper grades, of whom 10 were male and 34 were female. All 50 of the teachers in the lower grades were female; 17 of the 48 in the upper grades were male. Information about grade level, location, and gender differences in teachers' responses to our interview questions and vignettes is given in Brophy and Rohrkemper (1988).

Effectiveness Ratings

Ratings of the effectiveness of teachers in coping with problem students were obtained from principals and from classroom observers. Principals' ratings were collected in the process of identifying appropriate teachers for potential involvement in the study. Principals were informed about the nature of the study and told that we wished to interview teachers who had at least three years of experience and fit one of the following descriptions.

A. Outstanding teacher(s)

> Do you have a teacher whom you consider to be truly outstanding in effectively handling difficult students--minimizing their problem behavior and responding to it effectively when it does occur? Please note the name of this teacher below (Note another if you believe that more than one teacher at your school is truly outstanding in this regard, but bear in mind that we seek to identify the top 10% or so of these teachers).

B. Other Experienced Teacher(s)

> For each "outstanding" teacher included in the study, we want to include another teacher with at least three years of experience who is not as outstanding in effectiveness in dealing with the 12 types of problem students that we have identified for focus. We do not seek teachers who are overwhelmed with problems and cannot cope with

difficult students. Instead, we seek the 80% or so of teachers who are neither outstanding nor notably ineffective in this regard--teachers who maintain satisfactory classroom control and who usually can cope with the problems that difficult students present, even though they are not as outstanding as the teacher(s) named above. Teachers who teach at the same grade level as the teacher(s) named above are especially desirable.

Note that the questions called for the principals to judge teachers on their general effectiveness in dealing with problem students, rather than to rate their effectiveness with each of the 12 types separately. We would have preferred 12 separate ratings, but pilot interviews revealed that principals could not make such ratings validly, even though they did have general impressions of teachers' success in handling problem students.

We excluded principals who were in the first year at their present schools and thus had not had much time to gather information about their teachers. Even so, some principals had much more information than others, because of differences in length of contact with their teachers or in frequency and purpose of classroom visits and faculty meetings. Most principals appeared to have little direct (observational) knowledge of teachers' strategies and to judge teachers according to general impressions gleaned from personal interactions with them, the frequency and nature of their disciplinary referrals, and their reputations with other teachers and with students and their parents. We believe that most principals rated their teachers primarily on their success in handling disruptive, aggressive, and defiant students and that they placed more emphasis on their success in containing these students' undesirable behavior than on their success in developing more desirable behavior patterns. This is understandable in view of the limited information that most principals have available to them and the fact that maintaining safety and discipline in the schools is one of their primary responsibilities.

The teachers were recruited volunteers who were paid a modest honorarium in partial compensation for their out-of-class time spent responding to

interviews and vignettes. During recruitment they were informed about the purpose and methodology of the study, but not about their principals having rated them as either outstanding or average in coping with problem students. Since there were more comparison teachers than "outstanding" teachers, the recruiting strategy was first to obtain a commitment to participate from an "outstanding" teacher and then to recruit a comparison teacher working under similar conditions (ideally, in the same grade level at the same school). The teachers were informed that they would be visited for two half-days in their classrooms (to allow us to observe them in action and see what the students and the daily routine were like) and then interviewed during private meetings.

Recruited teachers were assigned to an observer/interviewer for data collection. These individuals were well acquainted with the purpose and design of the study, but they never knew whether the teachers they observed and interviewed had been designated as outstanding or as average by their principals. Consequently, they were in a position to give ratings of the teachers that would be independent of the principals' ratings and were asked to rate the teachers on the following scale.

> Teacher's group designation. Based on information from the principal, each teacher has been designated as being either outstanding or average at dealing with problem students. Into which group do you think this teacher is nominated?
>
> 5. I am confident that this teacher is in the outstanding group.
> 4. I think that this teacher is probably in the outstanding group.
> 3. I cannot decide.
> 2. I think that this teacher is probably in the average group.
> 1. I am confident that this teacher is in the average group.

These ratings were made after two half-days in the classroom but prior to the interviews, so they were based on what the observers saw of the teachers interacting with all of their students rather than on what the teachers said about coping with problem students.

We had anticipated positive but only moderate correlations between the principals' and the observers' ratings because teacher effectiveness in coping with problem students is complex and difficult to rate and because neither group of raters was working from a detailed information base (especially not the observers). However, the correlation between the two sets of ratings was even lower than expected (r = .11). Analyses of the relationships between these two sets of ratings and other measures developed in the study (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988) suggested that the principals' ratings were based primarily on the teachers' reputations for successfully managing their classes and controlling student behavior (especially disruptive and aggressive behavior), whereas the observers' ratings placed more emphasis on the teachers' success in creating a positive classroom atmosphere and obtaining willing compliance from their students. The two sets of ratings appear to convey reliable (but different) information, but the principals' ratings appear somewhat more focused on teachers' success in dealing with problem students.

Data Collection

Teachers were interviewed at times and places of their convenience. Interviews averaged three to four hours each, spread over at least two sessions. Interviews were audiotaped so that teachers' verbatim responses to questions were preserved for later transcription and coding. Teachers were allowed to respond to questions in their own words. If they asked for clarification, or if they were not addressing the questions asked, the interviewer would repeat or rephrase the question. Once teachers had made their initial free responses to questions without interruption, interviewers probed to clarify ambiguous points, address questions that had been omitted, or stimulate the teacher to elaborate on matters that had not been explained fully. Probing was confined

to such clarification and elaboration questions, however; interviewers did not ask teachers about matters that they did not bring up themselves.

Interviewing began with the vignettes, which had been constructed to depict behaviors typical of each of the 12 problem student types, described so that the depicted events would seem familiar and realistic to the teachers. The problem behavior was described as sufficiently troublesome that most teachers would feel compelled to take immediate action in response to it and as characteristic of the student rather than as an isolated event. In other words, the vignette made it clear that the depicted incidents were part of larger, chronic behavior patterns. To ensure that all teachers could easily imagine the incidents as occurring in their classrooms, we restricted the depicted problems to those judged likely to occur within the K-6 grade level range and eliminated all references to student age, geographic location, or other context factors that might not apply to certain teachers. Also, the students in the vignettes, although identified by gender (through their names) and by the nature of their chronic behavior problems, were not identified by race, social class, or other status characteristics. The identification of students by name (and thus by gender) was not done as part of a systematic attempt to include gender of the problem student as an independent variable (this would have required many more vignettes per teacher). Instead, the names were included because pilot work had revealed that this was necessary for realism. Teachers found it easy and natural to talk about "Tom" or "Mary," but not about someone known only as "a student."

There were two vignettes for each problem student type (rather than just one) because we wanted to see if teachers' responses to a particular type of problem behavior would differ according to the specifics of the situation. Thus, the two vignettes in each pair depicted the same general type of problem behavior but differed in the context in which the behavior appeared and in the

particular nature of the behavior itself. We would have preferred to have several vignettes for each problem type, but financial constraints limited us to two. Names (and thus, gender designation) were assigned according to the base rates of problem behavior. A male name was assigned to one of the failure syndrome vignettes and a female name was assigned to the other, because no major gender difference in base rates has been established for failure syndrome problems.

We anticipated that the interviews would elicit general and proactive (planned and initiated by the teachers themselves) strategies for dealing with problem students, whereas the vignettes would elicit descriptions of how the teachers would react to unplanned (and undesirable) behavior that occurred in specific situations. To simulate situations in which unexpected events occur that require immediate response, we required the teachers to respond to the vignettes "cold," without having had a chance to think about them or make notes beforehand. The vignettes were printed on separate sheets and presented one at a time. The instructions were as follows:

> This is a series of vignettes depicting classroom events involving problem students. Read each vignette and tell me what you would say and do in the immediate situation if you were the teacher. After telling me what you would say and do, you can elaborate by explaining your goals, the rationale for your goals and behavior, or any other details that you might wish to add.

Following completion of the vignettes, the teachers were given descriptions of the 12 problem student types and told that they would be interviewed a week or two later. In the meantime, they would be free to gather their thoughts and make notes if they wished to do so. The instructions were as follows:

> Attached is a list of 12 types of problem student that elementary teachers often identify as time-consuming, frustrating, and/or worrisome to teach. For the interview, you will be asked to draw upon your knowledge and teaching experience in order to tell how to handle each of these 12 types of problem student.

> We are interested in whatever you have to say about each problem student type, so that we will schedule as many appointments as we need. For each problem student type, first explain your general philosophy about dealing with this kind of student, indicating why you favor this approach over alternatives that you may be aware of. Then, list the specific strategies you would use. Try to be as richly descriptive as possible, including any step-by-step sequences that might be a part of your larger strategy, as well as any back-up strategies you would use if your preferred method did not work. Explain exactly what you mean or give examples when you use terms like "reward" or "punishment."
>
> In addition to describing your strategies, include an explanation of the rationale for each one (the assumptions upon which it is based; the reasons why it should work). Also, evaluate the relative success of various strategies you recommend. How likely are they to succeed, both in the short run and in the long run? Are certain strategies more successful than others? (We are also interested in strategies that do not work or why your recommended strategies are better.) Include any important qualifications about particular strategies. (Are some especially successful or unsuccessful with certain kinds of student? Are some feasible only if certain conditions are present? Are some successful only if used as a part of a broader approach?)

Interviewers were encouraged to probe more actively than during vignette administration, but again without interrupting the teacher's train of thought (unless it had gone into irrelevant material). If teachers did not spontaneously cover questions included in the instructions, the interviewers would prompt them. Also, the interviewer would ask for elaboration if the teacher mentioned some special program (token reward system, Magic Circle meeting, etc.) or unfamiliar concepts or procedures. In general, the interviewer's task was to elicit everything that the teacher had to say about dealing with each type of problem student and to be sure that the teacher's comments were clear and complete enough for us to understand and code accurately.

Data Preparation and Coding

The teachers' comments were transcribed and edited for correctness and for elimination of personal or institutional names. Responses to the 12 interviews and 24 vignettes then were content coded (separately) using categories developed by the authors (from a review of the literature and inspection of a sample

of 20 transcripts) and refined until they yielded at least 80% agreement when used independently by two staff members who had not been involved in their development. The transcripts were identified only by numbers so that coders did not know how the teachers had been rated by the principal or the observer. The coding involved presence versus absence decisions in which teachers whose transcripts included mention of the concepts or strategies subsumed within a coding category were scored "1" for that category and the other teachers were scored "0." Once their reliability was established on a subset of transcripts, the two staff members then coded all of the remaining transcripts in the larger set. Codes that they agreed upon were used as is, and disagreements were discussed until they were resolved.

Data Analysis and Display

Data on the frequencies with which categories were coded and on the relationships between these category codes and ratings of teachers' effectiveness in coping with problem students are shown in Table 1 (interview data) and Table 2 (vignette data). These tables are a reduced set of the total findings available, with reductions being achieved primarily by eliminating low-use categories that were not coded for at least six teachers. A few such categories do appear in the tables because they have theoretical importance or because (in Table 2) they were coded for fewer than six teachers for one vignette but six or more teachers for the other vignette.

The numbers to the left of the category descriptions in the tables indicate how many teachers were coded for each category. The maximum possible numbers were 95 for Table 1 and 97 for Table 2 (because codable transcriptions of interview responses were available for 95 teachers and codable transcriptions of vignette responses were available for 97 teachers). Since these numbers

Table 1

Interview Responses: Number of Teachers Coded for Each Category and Directions of Significant Relationships With Effectiveness Ratings

N	Coding Category
	A. General Problem-Solving Strategies
8	1. Control/suppress undesirable behavior (as sole approach)
38	2. Shape desirable behavior
4	3. Solve problem: instruction/training/modeling/help (to eliminate the problem entirely)
0	4. Help student cope with problem (but not eliminate entirely)
3	5. Identify and treat external causes
0	6. Insight (help student to recognize and understand the problem behavior)
6	7. Appeal/persuade/change attitudes
78	8. Encourage/reassure/build self-concept/provide supportive environment
	B. Specific Problem-Solving Strategies
15	9. Support through physical proximity/voice control/eye contact
6	10. Threaten or punish
7	11. Proscribe: set limits, rules, expectations
9	12. Appeal/persuade
13+	13. Prescribe/tell/instruct/elicit guidelines for improved coping
52	14. Praise
35	15. Reward (promised as incentive or delivered as reinforcement)
37	16. Encourage/express positive expectations
7	17. Kid gloves treatment (teacher makes special exceptions or allowances for failure syndrome students so as not to pressure them)
67	18. Build self-concept
56	19. Change task (e.g., give easier work)
13	20. Change social environment

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
6	21. Group meetings focused on the problem
10	22. Involve peers for support
20	23. Involve parents for support or problem solving
20+	24. Involve school-based authority figures or professionals for support or problem solving
59	25. Provide academic help (tutoring, etc.)
32	26. Get student off to a good start on assignments
20	27. Reduce expectations: give fewer/shorter assignments
20	28. Reduce expectations: give easier work
18+	29. Start at the student's level
10	30. Start below the student's level
25	31. Subdivide goals, give work in smaller segments, and/or monitor more closely (to minimize the time the student spends working alone)
7	32. Concrete materials or learning games
19	33. Diagnosis followed by different or more precise teaching
6	34. Special placement (in special education resource room, etc.)
7	35. Obtain student input in setting goals or selecting tasks
24	36. Chart or demonstrate student's progress or success
9	37. Incorporate student's interests into the work
36	38. Provide extra attention or support (for motivational reasons)
62	39. Focus on the student's effort, performance levels, or completion of regular work
9	40. Focus on student's strengths in other domains
52	41. Provide for frequent success experiences
9	42. Ignore or overlook student's mistakes

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
	C. Methods of Involving the Peers or the Class
53-	43. None
9	44. Class meetings (to discuss failure syndrome problems)
18	45. Assign peers to provide academic help or motivational support
15+	46. Provide for public demonstration of student's successes
8	47. Place in group with similar students
	D. Methods of Socializing Attitudes and Beliefs
65	48. None
12	49. Encourage realistic expectations (acceptance of strengths and weaknesses)
12-	50. Help these students to see struggling with assignments and persisting in working on their own as normal and expected behavior
9	51. Help them to notice relative improvement and think of such improvement as success (even if it falls short of total success)
	E. Strategies Identified as Ineffective
42	52. None
10	53. Continuing to give the student work that is too difficult or frustrating
7	54. Persisting with expectations that are too high
22	55. Scolding or criticizing
6	56. Punishing
13	57. Pushing the student to do better
14	58. Pep talks/verbal build-ups/denying the problem
	F. Reasons Given to Explain Failure Syndrome
35-	59. None
29+	60. Frequent failure experiences in the past
20	61. Frequent criticism for failure

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
10	62. Pampering or babying at home
10-	63. Inappropriate task demands at school
10	64. Change or novelty makes the student anxious
	G. Miscellaneous
80	65. Teacher's response includes long-term prevention or cure strategies
22	66. Teacher's response includes different strategies for differentiated subtypes of the problem
46	67. Teacher anticipates that improvement will occur only slowly over a long time period
48+	68. Teacher speaks of phasing out extra help, support, or rewards as the student improves

Table 2

Vignette Responses: Number of Teachers Coded for Each Category and Directions of Significant Relationships With Effectiveness Ratings

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
		A. General Problem Solving Approaches
58	43	1. Improve mental hygiene or coping skills
59	65	2. Shape through successive approximations
7	18	3. Control through threat or punishment
		B. Attributional Inferences
58+	86	4. Locus of causality: internal to student
22	39	5. Controllability: student can control problem behavior
23	17-	6. Intentionality: student acts intentionally
90	89	7. Stability: problem is stable over time
83	86	8. Globality: problem is generalized across situations
93+	95	9. Locus of causality: external to teacher
86	80+	10. Controllability: teacher can effect change
78+	77+	11. Stability: teacher expects stable improvement
70	50	12. Globality: teacher expected generalized improvement
		C. Types of Reward Mentioned
75	91	13. None
11	2	14. Symbolic reward (star, smiling face)
9	4	15. Special privilege
		D. Types of Punishment Mentioned
92	90	16. None
		E. Types of Supportive Behavior Mentioned
4	10	17. None
18	12	18. Specific behavioral praise

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
7	3	19. Global personal praise
51+	38	20. Encouragement
2	12	21. Kid gloves treatment
13	12	22. Involve peers in providing support or help
8	3	23. Involve parents in providing support or help
7	3	24. Involve other adults in providing support or help
75	68	25. Instruction (in better means of coping)
		F. Types of Threatening or Pressuring Behaviors Mentioned
95	90	26. None
		G. Specific Strategies for Responding to the Depicted Problem
10	6	27. Brief management response to the incident
23	7	28. Reward
6	8	29. Punishment
66	82	30. Prescribe or model better coping strategies
8	4	31. Change social environment (enlist peer support, assign to special roles, etc.)
12	10	32. Identify and eliminate source of problem
19	21+	33. Develop student's insight into the problem
69	47	34. Build student's self-concept
8	2	35. Develop personal relationship with the student
8	2	36. Involve the parents
		H. Rationales or Justifications for Behavior Change Demands
33-	12	37. No behavior change demands made
40	49	38. Offers no rationales or justifications for demands
8	6	39. Makes personal appeal
5	16	40. Logical analysis linking failure syndrome behavior to outcomes that are contrary to the student's best interests

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
20+	23	41. Appeals to student's pride or positive self-concept
		I. Methods of Boosting the Student's Motivation
10	20	42. Demand or insist upon better effort
5	11	43. Threaten or punish
14	5	44. Offer incentives for specified improvement
18	7	45. Appeal/cajole (teacher uses humor, cajoles, or appeals for renewed effort as a personal favor)
44	48	46. Reassure/encourage (teacher reassures students that they can succeed if they make the effort)
54+	60	47. Motivate by helping (teacher states that a little attention or help will be sufficient to motivate such students to continue working on their own)
		J. Methods of Providing Help or Simplifying the Task
78	81	48. None
7+	10	49. Help get started (provide tutorial assistance and work through several problems with the student)
		K. Methods of Reinforcing or Calling Attention to Success
38	24	50. Call attention to successes
21	14+	51. Reinforce progress or completed work
		L. Methods for Following Up on the Incident
40	59	52. None
4	11	53. Tutoring
6+	4	54. Contracts/shaping (teacher would set up a contract system, starting with short assignments but gradually lengthening them as completion rates improved)
34	13	55. Self-concept support (try to build on strength in other areas to build up general self-concept or help student compensate for problems with academics)

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
10	6	56. Parent involvement (discuss the problem with the parents or start sending home homework or tutorial activities)
		M. Miscellaneous
26	24	57. Teacher would gather more information before taking action
80	63	58. Teacher believes that student needs encouragement
20-	40	59. Teacher believes that student needs prodding

approach 100, the absolute numbers of teachers coded in the various categories also approximate the percentages of teachers coded in these categories.

Some of these numbers are followed by a plus sign, which indicates that coding of that category was positively associated with teacher effectiveness ratings (that is, that teachers who were coded "1" for the category had significantly higher effectiveness ratings than teachers who were coded "0" for the category). Similarly, minus signs following these numbers indicate that the category was negatively correlated with effectiveness ratings. Where a number appears without either a plus sign or a minus sign, no significant relationship between the category and the teacher effectiveness ratings was observed. Finally, where no information at all appears in the columns for either Vignette A or Vignette B in Table 2, the category applied only to the other vignette.

The plus and minus signs reflect significant relationships that appeared in either or both of two analyses relating the coding categories to teacher effectiveness ratings. The first analysis correlated teachers' scores (0 vs. 1) for the coding categories with numbers reflecting their principals' opinions of their effectiveness in coping with problem students (1 = average, 2 = outstanding). For these analyses, correlations that reached the .05 level of statistical significance (typically corresponding to r's of $\pm$ .17 or higher) were considered significant.

The second set of analyses involved comparing extreme groups identified by considering the principals' and the observers' ratings in combination. Specifically, these analyses involved comparing the 23 teachers who were both classified as outstanding by the principals and rated high (either 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale) by the observers with the 20 teachers who were both classified as average by the principals and rated low (1 or 2 on the 5-point scale) by the observers. For these extreme groups analyses, the numbers of teachers in each group that were coded for a particular category were expressed as proportions

of the total numbers in the group (e.g., 23 or 20), and then a one-way analysis of variance was run to test the statistical significance of the difference in proportion scores. When the F-values from these analyses were large enough to reach the .05 level of statistical significance, the relationships they reflected were identified by inserting plus or minus signs into the tables.

Thus, plus or minus signs in the tables indicate that the signified relationship was supported by statistically significant findings from the correlations with principals' ratings, the analyses of variance comparing extreme groups, or both. We chose to include significant extreme groups differences along with significant correlations with the principals' ratings when reporting our findings because, although we believe that the principals' ratings were generally more valid and based on more directly relevant information than the observers' ratings, we also believe that some principals put too much emphasis on the teachers' abilities to control disruptive students during conflict situations and not enough on teachers' abilities to help such students develop better attitudes and coping skills or to help problem student types (failure syndrome, perfectionist, immature, shy/withdrawn) that appear to require sympathy and encouragement more than control or discipline. The observers' ratings appear to have taken these teacher characteristics into account, so that this perspective is reflected in the extreme groups analyses (which reflect the observers' as well as the principals' opinions).

In addition to the analyses run for the total sample, correlations of coding category scores with principals' effectiveness ratings were also computed separately for teachers working in the early grades (K-3) versus the later grades (4-6) and for teachers working in Small City versus Big City. These subsample correlations generally paralleled the correlations for the sample as a whole, although occasionally contrasting patterns were observed suggesting

that what is effective in the early grades or in Small City differs from what is effective in the later grades or in Big City. These grade level and location differences are not shown in the tables but are described in the text.

Responses to the General Strategy Interview

Failure syndrome students were described to the teachers as follows:

> These children are convinced that they cannot do the work. They often avoid starting or give up easily. They expect to fail, even after succeeding.
>
> 1. easily frustrated
> 2. gives up easily
> 3. says "I can't do it"

The categories used for coding responses to the interview questions about coping with such students are shown in Table 1, which also shows the number of teachers coded for each category and the direction (+ or -) of the relationship between the teachers' presence-absence scores for the category and their ratings of effectiveness with problem students.

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The first eight categories (Section A in the table) reflect the teachers' general problem-solving approaches. Although substantial numbers of teachers were coded in all or almost all of these eight categories in the data on certain problem student types (hostile-aggressive students, for example), the responses concerning failure syndrome students were concentrated in just two of the categories. A large majority (78) of the teachers mentioned attempts to encourage, reassure, build up the self-concepts of, or provide supportive environments in the classroom for failure syndrome students. In addition or instead, 38 teachers mentioned attempts to shape greater persistence and task completion through successive approximations. Thus, the teachers' responses to failure syndrome students were concentrated heavily on encouragement and shaping

strategies; there was little or no emphasis on attempting to control or suppress undesirable behavior through threat of punishment, teaching of strategies designed to help these students cope with anxiety or failure reactions, identifying and treating external causes, developing insight concerning failure syndrome dynamics, or trying to change attitudes through appeal or persuasion.

These same trends can be seen in the frequencies with which the teachers mentioned more specific problem-solving strategies (Section B). The most commonly mentioned strategies were building the student's self-concept (67), encouraging increased effort, better performance, or improved completion rates on regular work (62), providing tutoring or other academic help (59), changing the task to make the work easier for the student (56), providing for frequent success experiences (52), and praising the student's efforts or successes (52). Each of these strategies was mentioned by more than half of the teachers.

Other commonly mentioned strategies included providing encouragement or expressing positive expectations (37), providing extra attention or support for motivational reasons (36), offering or delivering rewards (35), making sure that the student gets off to a good start on assignments (32), minimizing the time that the student must work independently by subdividing goals, giving work in smaller segments, or monitoring more closely (25), charting or demonstrating the student's progress or success levels (24), involving the parents for support or problem solving (20), involving school-based professionals for support or problem solving (20), reducing expectations by giving fewer or shorter assignments (20), reducing expectations by giving easier work (20), diagnosing particular learning problems and then following up with more precise teaching (19), starting at the student's current level and moving forward from there (18), and providing support through physical proximity, voice tone, or eye contact (15).

Smaller numbers of teachers were coded for mention of prescribing, telling, instructing, or eliciting information about more effective coping (13), changing the social environment (13), involving peers to provide support (10), starting below the student's current achievement level (10), incorporating the student's interests into the work (9), focusing on the student's strengths in other domains than achievement (9), ignoring or overlooking the student's mistakes (9), persuasion or appeal (9), proscribing by setting limits or reminding the student of rules and expectations (7), kid gloves treatment (7), use of concrete materials or learning games to increase motivation (7), obtaining student input in setting goals or selecting tasks (7), threatening punishment if the student does not improve (6) holding class meetings to discuss the problem (6), and placing the student in a special education resource room or some other setting outside the classroom (6). Responses that do not appear on the table because they were mentioned by fewer than six teachers included changing instruction in order to build on failure syndrome students' strengths while avoiding their weaknesses, referring the problem to outside medical or mental health professionals, attempting to extinguish the problem through ignoring, involving others (parents, the principal, peers) to pressure or punish the student, direct or indirect modeling of improved coping strategies, counseling designed to increase the student's insight, and various brief interventions involving redirection, criticism, or time out.

The data in Section C concern methods of involving individual peers or the class as a whole. Fewer than half of the teachers mentioned such methods, which included assigning peers to provide academic help or motivational support (18), providing failure syndrome students with opportunities to display their accomplishments or successes publicly in the group situation (15), holding class meetings to discuss failure syndrome problems (9), and placing these students into a group with other students who have similar problems (8).

Section D concerns methods of socializing attitudes and beliefs. Only about a third of the teachers mentioned such methods, of which the most common were encouraging the students to develop realistic expectations and acceptance of their strengths and weaknesses (12), trying to convince them that struggle and frustration are normal parts of learning new skills and that they will need to learn to persist in the face of difficulties (12), and helping them to notice relative improvement and to think of such improvement as success even if it falls short of perfection (9).

Section E provides data on the strategies that the teachers rejected as ineffective. The most frequently mentioned of these were scolding or criticizing (22), pep talks, verbal build-ups, or attempts to deny the problem (14), pushing the student to do better (13), continuing to give the student work that is too difficult or frustrating (10), persisting with expectations that are too high (7), and punishing (6).

Section F provides data on the reasons offered as explanations for failure syndrome behavior. The most commonly mentioned reasons were frequent experiences with failure in the past (29), frequent criticism for failure (20), pampering or babying at home (10), inappropriate task demands at school (10), and difficulty in coping with change or novelty (10).

The remaining data (Section G) indicate that a heavy majority (80) of the teachers mentioned long-term prevention or cure strategies in addition to or instead of strategies for immediate responses to specific incidents, 22 mentioned different strategies linked to differentiated subtypes of failure syndrome students, 46 mentioned that improvement probably would occur only gradually over a long time frame, and 48 mentioned phasing out extra help, support, or rewards as the student improves.

Taken together, the frequency data in Table 1 indicate that the teachers' responses to the interview concerning failure syndrome students were heavily

concentrated on encouragement and shaping strategies involving praise, encouragement, self-concept support, programming for success experiences, and tutorial assistance designed to get these students off to a good start on their assignments and ensure that they are able to complete those assignments successfully.

Relationships Between Interview Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

Unsurprisingly in view of the frequency data just described, there were few significant differences between the higher rated teachers and the lower rated teachers in their responses to the failure syndrome interview. The higher rated teachers generally had longer, richer protocols that gave more details about specific strategies, but most of the teachers in both groups stressed praise, encouragement, self-concept support, programming for success, and providing tutorial assistance. Thus, there was no evidence that the higher rated teachers favored one method and the lower rated teachers preferred a contrasting method for responding to these students. Instead, both groups stressed the same basic principles but the higher rated teachers had somewhat more ideas and reported using a broader range of strategies.

For example, the higher rated teachers were more likely to mention suggesting guidelines for coping with anxiety or discouragement (in addition to guidelines for responding to the task); starting at the student's current level of understanding when providing task assistance; not only helping failure syndrome students achieve success but allowing them opportunities to publicly demonstrate this success in group situations; and gradually phasing out special treatment when it was no longer needed. These teachers were also more likely to mention getting advice or assistance from resource teachers or other educational specialists. In identifying reasons why students develop failure syndrome problems, the higher rated teachers were more likely to mention a past

history featuring frequent failure experiences, whereas the lower rated teachers were more likely to mention inappropriate task demands (students given assignments that are too difficult for them). Perhaps the teachers who made the latter response did in fact experience difficulty in matching assignments to their students' needs. The remaining significant difference indicated that the lower rated teachers were more likely than the higher rated teachers to try to socialize failure syndrome students' attitudes and beliefs by convincing them that it is normal to struggle with assignments and that they would need to accept this and persist nevertheless. Teachers who emphasized this response apparently were among the minority of teachers in the sample who did not emphasize encouragement, assistance, self-concept support, and the other frequently mentioned (and apparently effective) strategies for responding to failure syndrome students.

In summary, the vast majority of the teachers' interview responses called for providing failure syndrome students with support and assistance designed to ensure that they could in fact achieve success on their assignments, get them off to a good start, monitor them closely and provide any genuinely needed help, encourage effort and persistence, and praise accomplishments and improvements. Both the higher rated and the lower rated teachers stressed these same strategies, although the higher rated teachers typically mentioned more such strategies and spoke more systematically and in more detail when describing their implementation. Mention of failure to match assignments to students' current achievement levels and responses that emphasized appeals for increased persistence without provision of much assistance or support were associated with lower effectiveness ratings.

Grade Level and Location Comparisons

The data for the study as a whole (e.g., considering all 12 types of problem students) revealed several consistent grade level and location differences in the teachers' interview and vignette responses, including those concerning failure syndrome students (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988). Teachers in the lower grades more often mentioned behavioral shaping and environmental engineering strategies, as well as strategies for providing support, assistance, or counseling to problem students. Teachers in the upper grades were more likely to mention making demands or threatening punishment, as well as trying to change attitudes through logical appeal or persuasion. Small City teachers gave longer and more detailed responses and mentioned more of most types of strategies that called for time-consuming and individualized attention to problem students. In contrast, Big City teachers were more likely to restrict their interventions to strategies designed to control problem behavior on the spot (without including long-term prevention or cure strategies).

Correlational analyses done separately within grade level groups yielded no direct contradictions (e.g., cases where the same coding category showed a significant positive correlation with the principals' effectiveness rating in the lower grades but a significant negative correlation in the upper grades, or vice versa). However, a few variables yielded correlations of $\pm$ .30 or greater in one of the groups but near-zero correlations in the other group. Specifically, failure to mention methods of involving the peers or the class (Category #43 in Table 1) showed a significant negative relationship with the principals' ratings only in the lower grades, and two other categories (involving the parents for support or problem solving and involving school-based professionals for support or problem solving) showed positive relationships only for the lower grades. In addition, mention of phasing out extra help, support, or rewards as the student improves showed a positive relationship only for the

upper grades, and mention of changing the student's social environment showed a negative relationship only for the upper grades. There is no obvious age- or stage-related reason for any of these grade level differences in correlational patterns. In any case, they are limited and relatively unremarkable, suggesting that what constitutes effective teacher response to failure syndrome problems is much more similar than different across grades K-6.

There also were no contradictions between the Small City and the Big City correlations, and this time only one variable correlated ± .30 or more in one location but had a negligible correlation in the other: involving the parents for support or problem solving was correlated positively with the principals' ratings but only in Big City. This single contrast is interesting, however, because it is part of a pattern seen frequently in our data suggesting that mention of parent involvement is more likely to correlate (positively) with principals' effectiveness ratings of the teachers in Big City than in Small City. In turn, this pattern fits well with the findings of Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker (1979) indicating that parent involvement is an important component of school effectiveness for schools serving inner-city and minority populations.

In summary, the data from the interviews concerning failure syndrome students are notable less for their contrasts than for their similarities--not only the similarities in the findings for teachers who differed in grade level or school location but also the similarities in the findings for teachers who differed in effectiveness ratings. The responses of the vast majority of the teachers converged on a set of commonly mentioned (and apparently effective) strategies: praise, encouragement, self-concept support, programming for success experiences, and tutorial help with assignments. The responses of the higher rated teachers were more systematic and detailed, but the responses of the lower rated teachers tended to emphasize the same basic ideas.

Responses to Vignette A

Vignette A reads as follows:

> Joe could be a capable student, but his self-concept is so poor that he actually describes himself as stupid. He makes no serious effort to learn, shrugging off responsibility by saying that "that stuff" is too hard for him. Right now he is dawdling instead of getting started on an assignment that you know he can do. You know that if you approach him he will begin to complain that the assignment is too hard and that he can't do it.

Data on responses to Vignette A are shown in Table 2.

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The data in Section A indicate that 59 teachers mentioned influence attempts designed to shape Joe's behavior through successive approximations, 58 mentioned attempts to improve his mental hygiene or coping skills, and only 7 mentioned attempts to control his behavior through insistent demands (backed by at least the implied threat of punishment). Thus, as in their interview responses, the teachers emphasized encouragement and shaping strategies in their responses to Vignette A.

The attributional inferences data (Section B) indicate that most teachers saw Joe's problem as stable over time (90) and as generalized across situations (83). Furthermore, although a majority (58) attributed his behavior solely to causes internal to Joe, fewer than one-fourth of the teachers saw him as able to control his behavior if he tried to do so (22) or as misbehaving intentionally (23). Thus, the teachers tended to see Joe as a victim of circumstances beyond his control. Almost all (93) of the teachers saw the problem as caused by factors external to themselves (and usually internal to Joe), yet heavy majorities were confident that they could improve the situation through their own interventions (86) and that these improvements would be stable over time (78) and generalized across situations (70). These are unusually high totals, indicating that the teachers were more confident in being able to intervene

successfully with failure syndrome problems of the type displayed by Joe than they were with most of the other problems studied in our research.

The Section C data indicate that only a small minority of the teachers mentioned offering rewards as incentives to Joe, typically symbolic rewards (11) or special privilege rewards (9). Punishment was mentioned by only six teachers.

All but four of the teachers mentioned at least one supportive behavior (Section E), with the most frequently mentioned forms being instruction (75), encouragement (51), specific behavioral praise (18), involving the peers in providing support or help (13), involving the parents in providing support or help (8), involving other adults in providing support or help (7), and global personal praise (7). Only two teachers mentioned threatening or pressuring behaviors (Section F).

Data on commonly mentioned specific strategies for responding to Joe are given in Section G. Most of these involved providing him with some form of support or assistance. The most frequently mentioned strategies were attempting to build up his self-concept (69), prescribing or modeling better coping strategies (66), offering rewards for task persistence or completion (23), attempting to develop his insight into the problem (19), attempting to identify and eliminate the source of the problem (12), and brief management responses designed to deal with the incident in only a minimal way and get Joe back to work quickly (10).

The data in Section H indicate that 33 teachers would make no behavioral change demands on Joe and that a majority (40) of the teachers who would make such demands would not offer rationales to justify them. Among those who would offer rationales, most would appeal to Joe's sense of pride or self-concept (20) or would make a personal appeal predicated on Joe's desire to please the teacher (8).

The data in Section I concern methods of boosting Joe's motivation. The most commonly mentioned strategies were motivating by helping (54) and providing reassurance or encouragement (44). Other methods mentioned by more than five teachers included personal appeals or attempts to cajole Joe into renewed effort (18), offer of incentives for specified improvement (14), and demanding or insisting upon better effort (10).

The data in Section J concern the specific methods of providing help or simplifying the task described by the 20 teachers who mentioned such methods. Most of these methods were mentioned by fewer than 6 teachers and thus do not appear in the table (reexplain or clarify the directions, divide the task into smaller segments or monitor more frequently, reduce the length of the task, substitute an easier task, or provide extended tutorial help). However, seven teachers did mention the method of helping Joe to get started by providing brief tutorial assistance and working through several problems with him.

The data in Section K reflect the specifics of the teachers' comments about reinforcing progress or success. Of the teachers who spoke to this topic, 38 mentioned that it was important to praise Joe's successes or call attention to them in other ways so that he would see that he can do the work, whereas another 21 mentioned reinforcing Joe's accomplishments but with emphasis on reinforcing continuous progress rather than on calling his attention to the fact that he can do the work.

The data in Section L indicate that a majority of the teachers mentioned at least one prevention or follow-up strategy. These included attempts to support or build up Joe's self-concept (34), involving the parents to provide support or assistance at home (10), and behavior contracts or other methods of shaping improved task completion rates through successive approximations (6).

Finally, the data in Section M indicate that 26 teachers stated that they would gather more information about Joe before taking action, 80 believed that

Joe needed support and encouragement, and 20 believed that he needed prodding in addition or instead.

In summary, the vast majority of the teachers were confident that they could intervene successfully with Joe, and most would do so using strategies that featured support, encouragement, instructional assistance, and shaping of improved persistence and task completion rates through successive approximations. The majority would confine their interventions to such positive and supportive strategies; only a minority would prod or pressure Joe and even fewer would go so far as to threaten him with punishment.

Relationships Between Vignette A Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

As did the interview data, the Vignette A data indicate that although the higher rated teachers generally had longer, richer protocols that gave more details about specific strategies, most of the teachers in both groups stressed praise, encouragement, self-concept support, and tutorial assistance. Except for the minority of teachers who stressed pressuring Joe rather than providing him with support and encouragement, the differences between the lower rated and the higher rated teachers were not so much in the types of strategies reported but in the numbers of such strategies and the degree of detail given in describing their implementation.

Thus, the higher rated teachers were more likely than the lower rated teachers to mention encouragement as a supportive behavior, making improvement demands on Joe and appealing to his pride or positive self-concept when doing so, providing him with brief supportive help as a way to motivate him to get to work or persist on tasks, giving him extra help in getting started on tasks, and offering behavior contracts or implementing other plans for shaping improvement through successive approximations. In contrast to this approach of making improvement demands on Joe but at the same time providing him with support,

encouragement, and assistance designed to ensure that he could meet such demands, the lower rated teachers were more likely to report either making no improvement demands on Joe at all (e.g., by lowering their expectations for him or by providing him with praise or encouragement that was not contingent upon actual performance) or else attempting to pressure or prod him toward improved persistence or task completion but without providing him with much special support and assistance.

In addition to these differences in strategies for responding to Joe, there were differences between the higher rated and the lower rated teachers in attributional inferences. First, even though the sample of teachers as a whole was unusually confident in their ability to intervene successfully with Joe, the higher rated teachers had significantly greater confidence that the improvements they could achieve would be stable over time rather than merely temporary. This is part of a pervasive pattern seen throughout our data indicating that the higher rated teachers tended to be more confident in their ability to intervene successfully with problem students than the lower rated teachers did.

Finally, the higher rated teachers were more likely to locate the cause of Joe's problem in sources external to themselves (and primarily internal to Joe). These differences are probably related to the finding reported for the interview data indicating that the lower rated teachers were more likely than the higher rated teachers to attribute failure syndrome problems to teacher failure to match the difficulty level of assignments to the student's current level of readiness. In short, the higher rated teachers tended to assume implicitly that the demands made on students were appropriate (and therefore that failure syndrome problems stemmed from the student's mistakenly pessimistic attributions and self-efficacy perceptions), whereas the lower rated teachers were less confident that this was the case (and thus more likely to fear that

failure syndrome reactions stemmed from understandable frustration in the face of task demands that were objectively too difficult for the student to handle).

Grade Level and Location Comparisons

Neither the grade level comparisons nor the location comparisons in the data for Vignette A yielded contradictions or noteworthy contrasts. Thus, as with the interview data, the Vignette A data reveal similarities across different subgroups of teachers. In summary, the Vignette A data indicate that the higher rated teachers were highly confident in their abilities to intervene successfully with Joe and that they would do so using strategies that combined demands for improved persistence and task completion with provision of support, encouragement, and task assistance. Many of the lower rated teachers would take the same general approach but implement it less comprehensively or systematically, although some lower rated teachers would either fail to make serious attempts to improve Joe's behavior or else confine their efforts to pressuring or prodding Joe without at the same time providing him with needed support, encouragement, and assistance.

Responses to Vignette B

Vignette B reads as follows:

> Mary has the intelligence to succeed, if she applied herself, but she is convinced that she can't handle it. She gets frustrated and disgusted very easily, and then she gives up. Instead of trying to solve the problem another way, or coming to you for help, she skips the problem and moves on. Today she brings you her assignment, claiming to be finished, but you see that she has skipped many items.

Data on the responses to Vignette B are also shown in Table 2.

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The data in Section A indicate that 65 teachers mentioned attempts to shape improvements in Mary's behavior through successive approximations as a

general problem-solving approach, 43 mentioned attempts to improve her mental hygiene or coping skills, and 18 mentioned making demands or threatening punishment. Thus, the distribution of general approaches is similar to that seen for Vignette A, but with somewhat more emphasis on relatively impersonal shaping strategies and correspondingly less emphasis on more personalized provision of encouragement, support, or assistance.

The attributional inferences data in Section B indicate that most teachers saw Mary's problem as stable over time (89) and generalized across situations (86). Most (86) also attributed her behavior solely to causes internal to Mary, but only 39 saw her as able to control her behavior if she tried and only 17 saw her as misbehaving intentionally. Even though almost all (95) of the teachers saw the problem as caused by factors external to themselves (and usually internal to Mary), most were confident that they could intervene effectively (80) and elicit stable improvements (77). However, only about half (50) of the teachers expected that these improvements would generalize across situations. Thus, a heavy majority of the teachers were confident that they could cause Mary to perform more satisfactorily in their own classrooms, but many of these teachers were not confident that these improvements would generalize to other classrooms or other achievement situations.

Few teachers mentioned rewards or punishments in response to this vignette, but the vast majority mentioned at least one type of supportive behavior. The most commonly mentioned supportive behaviors in Section E were instruction (68), encouragement (38), specific behavioral praise (12), kid gloves treatment (12), and involving peers for providing support or help (12). Very few teachers mentioned threatening or pressuring behaviors (Section F).

The Section G data indicate that the most commonly mentioned specific strategies were prescribing or modeling better coping strategies (82), trying to build up Mary's self-concept (47), trying to develop her insight into the

problem (21), trying to identify and eliminate the source of the problem (10), threatening punishment (8), offering rewards (7), and brief management responses (6). Clearly, by far the most frequent response to Mary was to instruct her in more desirable responses to classroom tasks (e.g., to tell her to persist in trying to figure out difficult items and then to seek help from the teacher if necessary, but not to skip the item or just record a wild guess). This instruction was often accompanied by encouragement or self-concept support.

The Section H data indicate that all but 12 of the teachers would make behavioral change demands on Mary, but that more than half of these (49) would not offer rationales to justify these demands. Among teachers who would offer rationales or justifications, 23 mentioned appealing to Mary's pride or positive self-concept, 16 mentioned logical analysis linking failure syndrome behavior to outcomes that are contrary to Mary's best interests, and 6 mentioned making a personal appeal for improved behavior predicated on Mary's desire to please the teacher.

The Section I data are similar to those for Vignette A in indicating that the most commonly mentioned methods for boosting Mary's motivation were providing her with attention or help (60) and providing her with reassurance or encouragement (48). Other methods included demanding or insisting upon better effort (20), threatening punishment (11), cajoling or appeals for better effort as a personal favor (7), and offering incentives for specified improvement (5).

Also as with Vignette A, the Section J data indicate that only a minority of the teachers mentioned specific methods for providing help or simplifying the task for Mary, and that helping her to get started on the task was the only one mentioned by more than six teachers (10).

The Section K data indicate that 24 teachers mentioned the importance of praising Mary's successes or calling attention to them in other ways so that

she would see that she could do the work, and another 14 teachers mentioned reinforcing her accomplishments but with emphasis on continuous progress rather than on calling her attention to the fact that she could do the work.

The Section L data indicate that only a minority of the teachers mentioned one or more follow-up methods. The most commonly mentioned methods were providing Mary with self-concept support (13), providing her with sustained individual tutoring help (11), and involving the parents to provide support or assistance at home (6).

Finally, the Section M data indicate that 24 teachers mentioned attempts to gather more information about Mary before taking action, 63 stated the belief that Mary needs encouragement, and 40 stated the belief that Mary needs to be prodded in addition to or instead of being encouraged.

Relationships Between Vignette B Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

The Vignette B data were concentrated even more heavily around a single approach to the problem than the interview and Vignette A data were, so that the list of significant differences between the higher rated and the lower rated teachers is even skimpier. The overwhelming majority of the teachers, regardless of effectiveness rating, stated that they would respond to Mary by explaining that it was not acceptable, nor was it in her own best interests for her to skip items and turn in incomplete work, and that instead she would be expected both to be more persistent in trying to solve problems on her own and to seek help from the teacher if persistent efforts still had not succeeded. Most of these teachers would also attempt to motivate Mary by helping her with the work, by reassuring or encouraging her, or by providing self-concept support.

The higher rated teachers were more likely than the lower rated teachers to supplement this general pattern with attempts to develop Mary's insight into her behavior and its consequences and with praise or other reinforcement of her

continuous progress in completing assignments successfully. In addition, the higher rated teachers were more confident than the lower rated teachers in their abilities to elicit significant and stable improvements in Mary's behavior. Finally, higher rated teachers were significantly less likely than lower rated teachers to be among the 17 teachers who interpreted Mary's behavior as a deliberate attempt to shirk her responsibilities as a student (rather than interpreting it as stemming from an incorrect but subjectively genuine belief that the work was too difficult for her).

Grade Level and Location Comparisons

There were no contradictory significant relationships in either the grade level or the location analyses, although several categories showed correlations of $\pm$ .30 or greater with the principals' ratings in one subgroup but near-zero correlations in the other. Teacher belief that Mary needed to be pressured or prodded (in addition to or instead of needing to be supported and encouraged) showed positive correlations with the principals' ratings in the early grades and in Big City but not in the later grades or in Small City. Teacher confidence in being able to effect significant improvement and mention of demanding or insisting upon improved behavior as a means of motivating Mary also showed significant positive relationships only in Big City. These contrasts suggest that students in Big City, especially in the early grades, were more likely than students in Small City to begin to skip difficult items if they began to get discouraged in their work, and/or that their teachers had discovered that they could put a stop to this behavior by forcefully demanding better efforts. Perhaps Mary's behavior in Vignette B better represents the kinds of failure syndrome problems encountered in Big City, whereas Joe's behavior in Vignette A better represents the kinds of failure syndrome problems found in Small City. In any case, the data for Vignette B indicate that the higher rated teachers in

Big City were likely to forcefully demand improved efforts from Mary in addition to or instead of the more commonly reported response of supplying her with encouragement or self-concept support in addition to corrective socialization and instructional help.

Other location contrasts indicated that the strategies of motivating by helping and reinforcing by calling attention to Mary's successes had negative relationships with the principals' ratings but only in Big City, that the general problem-solving approach of improving Mary's mental hygiene or coping skills had a positive relationship but only in Small City, and that failure to mention any follow-up strategies had a negative relationship but only in Small City. These contrasts are also compatible with the interpretation that the higher rated teachers in Small City were likely to supplement their provision of instructional help to Mary with attempts at encouragement or self-concept support, whereas the higher rated teachers in Big City were more likely to supplement their provision of instructional help with socialization efforts involving clarifying expectations and demanding improved efforts.

In summary, most of the teachers recognized Mary's behavior as a failure syndrome problem rather than interpreting it as evidence of a deliberate attempt to shirk her responsibilities as a student, so that they would provide her with instructional support and assistance. Even so, they would also explain to Mary that it was not acceptable for her to skip items and that she would be expected to work more persistently when she encountered difficulties and to come to the teacher for help rather than turn in incomplete work. A majority of the teachers would supplement this instruction and socialization with encouragement and self-concept support for Mary, but a significant minority, including many of the higher rated teachers in Big City (especially in the early grades), would be forceful and insistent in demanding improved performance from her.

Comparison of Findings From the Two Vignettes

The teachers reported similar perceptions and attributional inferences concerning Joe and Mary, although they were somewhat more likely to attribute Mary's behavior to causes solely within herself (rather than to environmental causes) and were correspondingly less confident in their abilities to bring about improvements that would generalize beyond their own classrooms. Reported response strategies to the two vignettes were also similar, featuring task assistance with assignments and socialization in the form of clarification about expected behavior, usually accompanied by attempts at encouragement or self-concept support.

A majority of the teachers emphasized shaping improved behavior through successive approximations in responding to both vignettes. However, rather than involving behavior contracts or other behavior modification methods calling for offering rewards as incentives, these shaping efforts involved initially providing the failure syndrome student with a great deal of instructional support and task assistance but then gradually reducing this support and assistance as the student gained confidence in his or her ability to handle the work. Most of the teachers viewed this task assistance as important not only for the instructional scaffolding it provided to the student but also for its motivational role in reassuring the student that help would be available if needed and in redirecting attention from thoughts of frustration and discouragement toward renewed task engagement.

Within this general pattern of similarity in response to the two vignettes, there was also a discernible pattern of contrast that subsumed most of the noteworthy differences: Whereas a heavy majority of the teachers saw Joe as a victim and mentioned strategies for supplementing task assistance with sympathetic attempts to provide encouragement or self-concept support, the teachers were notably less likely to mention attempts to provide encouragement or

support to Mary, and correspondingly more likely to view her as needing to be pressured or prodded to improve her behavior. To put it another way, the teachers tended to respond to Joe primarily in terms of attempts to repair a damaged self-concept and related attributions and self-efficacy perceptions, whereas they tended to respond to Mary primarily in terms of correcting bad work habits through socialization. These differences were especially noticeable among the higher rated teachers (especially in Big City). It should be noted in this connection, however, that even the teachers who were insistent in demanding improved performance from Mary tended to do so in the context of reassuring her that she would be able to meet these demands and providing her with any needed task assistance to help her do so (i.e., not in the context of blame and threats of punishment).

Qualitative Impressions and Examples

Rereading and reflection upon the teachers' interview and vignette responses has suggested several qualitative impressions that supplement the information contained in the tables. It has also led us to identify instructive examples of strategies heretofore discussed only in more general terms, as well as ideas or strategies mentioned by only one or two teachers that seemed worth including in this report (even though they did not occur often enough to allow statistical analyses of their relationships to effectiveness ratings).

General Impressions

Unlike teachers in the upper grades, who tended to emphasize relatively impersonal task assistance and clarification of expectations, the teachers working in the lower grades often stressed communication of positive affect as part of their reported response to failure syndrome students. These teachers would speak of the importance of getting physically close to these students, working together with them on assignments, showing appreciation for their efforts, and

providing them with encouragement and reinforcement designed to build their self-concepts and confidence. This sympathetic and supportive stance probably helped such teachers to get off to a good start in working with failure syndrome students, and probably led to successful conclusions when it was combined with systematic task assistance and socialization of student attitudes and beliefs.

Good intentions are not enough by themselves, however, and the strategic thinking of some of the the most warmly sympathetic teachers appeared to be too scattered to be very effective. Once they got started talking about helping students with academic difficulties, some of these teachers would begin to drift away from failure syndrome problems toward other problems such as perfectionism or low achievement due to limited ability rather than to motivational problems. Such teachers also were prone to mention strategies that were overreactions to the defined problem (such as giving failure syndrome students shorter or easier assignments rather than helping them to see that they were capable of completing the regular assignments successfully) and to talk about implementing potentially helpful strategies in ways that would limit their effectiveness (recognizing the value of praise but talking about praising the failure syndrome students' clothing or appearance instead of their work progress or accomplishments).

Several teachers working in kindergarten or first grade observed that failure syndrome problems as severe as those described in our definition and illustrated in our vignettes are relatively rare in these early grades, although they become more common later. As one teacher put it, the children's self-concepts have not yet been "beaten down enough" yet. Another reason, suggested by research in the motivational aspects of developmental psychology (Stipek, 1984), is that most young children tend to have positive self-concepts of ability and optimistic performance expectations as part of the egocentrism

characteristic of what Piagetian psychologists call the preoperational years (from about age 2 until about age 6 or 7). As children begin to become more realistic and operational in their thinking, and as they begin to make increasingly frequent and accurate comparisons between themselves and their peers, these unrealistically positive self-concepts and expectations begin to give way to more realistic (or in the case of failure syndrome students, unjustifiedly pessimistic) perceptions and expectations. In any case, it appears that failure syndrome problems are relatively more serious and difficult to change in older students than in younger students.

Some teachers working in kindergarten and first grade also mentioned that certain students superficially appear to have failure syndrome problems in that they are prone to whine or say "I can't do it" in response to assignments, but instead of genuinely suffering from shattered confidence either are merely seeking more attention and personalized interaction with the teacher or are unaccustomed to having demands made on them because they have been pampered or babied at home. These socially immature students do not so much need reassurance and task assistance as they need friendly and supportive yet firm student role socialization and limit setting.

Examples and Unique Suggestions

The following are noteworthy as examples or elaborations of commonly mentioned strategies or as unique suggestions made by individual teachers.

Causes. One teacher suggested that failure syndrome problems are especially likely to appear among grade repeaters who have become convinced that they are stupid because they are repeating the grade. Another suggested that such problems are likely to appear in students who are learning English as a second language (this teacher was fluent in Spanish and reported that it was

helpful to speak in Spanish to Spanish-speaking failure syndrome students when giving them individualized task assistance).

Task simplification strategies. One teacher would provide a failure syndrome student with brief individualized help and then tell him to continue working a specified set of problems on his own and then to raise his hand so that she could come back to check his work and get him started on the next set. Another teacher would tell such students to give unobtrusive signals (such as folding their arms) to use when they had finished with part of the work and needed to speak to the teacher before going on. A third teacher would mark "C" next to correct answers on the page, then place a line farther down the page and ask the child to see if she could get that far by the time the teacher got back to her.

Problem redefinition strategies. A few teachers spoke of defining the problem to the student in ways that made it seem less serious or threatening. In responding to Vignette B, for example, one such teacher would define the problem as a tendency to rush through the work too quickly and thus would tell Mary to go back, take her time and finish carefully, and then bring up the assignment for review. Similarly, another teacher would indicate to Mary that she had inadvertently (i.e., not deliberately) skipped some of the items and return the paper to her for completion.

Peer involvement. One teacher stated that she would hold Magic Circle sessions to discuss with the class as a whole how people are alike and different, some are better at one thing than another, we all have hidden strengths that have not shown up yet that we need to develop, and so on. In responding to Vignette B, this same teacher stated that she would appoint another student to be a designated helper to Mary. Mary could come to the student to confer about a problem and get help in getting started on it (but the peer helper wouldn't do the problem for her). The main idea would be to let Mary know that she could

get help if she needed it, but she must finish her assignments. Several teachers mentioned that having failure syndrome students act as tutors to peers or younger children was helpful in building up their confidence in their own knowledge.

Miscellaneous suggestions. One teacher mentioned that computerized instruction, programmed learning, and related forms that allow the student to get feedback privately are especially helpful for students who are concerned about being monitored or about having others see them make mistakes. Several teachers mentioned the value of talking to parents and letting them know that it is important to provide encouragement and reinforcement for their child's academic efforts and successes and also not to call the child stupid or to allow peers or siblings to do so. One teacher with experience across the grade levels stated that praising students for what they are good at without mentioning their weaknesses might be effective for younger students, but that she had taught fifth- and sixth- graders who would respond to "You're the best basketball player in the room" with "Yes, but I can't read, and you're not helping me learn to read." Finally, for students with test anxiety or perfectionism problems in addition to failure syndrome problems, one teacher would make a point of identifying certain work as "practice work" that would not be graded (at least not in the same sense that the regular work was graded). This teacher would also tell the student "There's nothing wrong with making a mistake, that's why there are erasers on pencils!"

General Discussion

Compared to their responses concerning some of the other problem student types addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study, the teachers were unusually confident about their abilities to intervene successfully with failure syndrome students and they tended to mention similar response strategies regardless of

their grade level, location, or effectiveness ratings. A few teachers spoke of providing support and encouragement to such students without making any demands on them and a few others spoke of making demands without providing special support or assistance (especially in response to Vignette B), but the majority of the teachers in responding to the interview and both vignettes spoke of using a combination of support, encouragement, and task assistance to shape improved work habits through successive approximations (see appendix for selected excerpts from transcripts).

These teachers would make it clear to failure syndrome students that they were expected to work conscientiously and persistently so as to turn in work done completely and correctly, but they would also express their willingness to provide help if needed, reassure them that they would not be given work that they could not do and that they did in fact have the ability to succeed if they applied reasonable effort, visit them frequently during work times to monitor their progress and provide any needed structuring or assistance, and reinforce them by praising their successes, calling attention to their progress, and providing them with opportunities to display their accomplishments publicly. This special treatment would be faded gradually (over a period typically expected to last several months) as the failure syndrome students gained confidence in their abilities to handle the work and began to do so more persistently and independently.

The higher rated teachers gave more systematic and elaborate descriptions of how this strategy would be implemented, whereas most lower rated teachers spoke in briefer and vaguer terms but reported the same general lines of approach to the problem. The remaining lower rated teachers tended to be those who either mentioned support and encouragement but not demands or mentioned making demands but not providing reassurance and assistance in helping the child to meet those demands. One aspect of the high degree of confidence that

the teachers felt about their abilities to intervene effectively with failure syndrome students was the infrequent mention of a desire for assistance from resource teachers, educational specialists, or other outside experts. Nor did the teachers mention terms such as "efficacy training" or "attribution retraining" or any of the people or programs cited in the introduction to this report (with the exception of the one teacher who mentioned Magic Circle meetings). Thus, it appears that teachers tend to perceive and respond similarly to the failure syndrome problems that they encounter in the classroom, with the result that most of them intuitively develop a similar set of response strategies that they believe will be effective in achieving gradual improvement in such problems if applied consistently over several months.

Perhaps this is not surprising given that failure syndrome problems (a) occur in the context of academic teaching and learning (which have been the focus of most of the teacher's professional education); (b) do not involve alienation, defiance, or other disruptive behaviors that threaten the teacher's control of the classroom; and (c) can be handled for the most part within typical classroom structures and activities and using just minor adaptations of strategies that are basic to the teacher role in any case (support, encouragement, task assistance, praise and reinforcement). Even so, it is worth noting that the higher rated teachers were more likely than the lower rated teachers to mention getting advice or help from resource teachers or other educational specialists as part of their response to failure syndrome students.

The modal response mentioned by the teachers, especially in its more systematic versions given by higher rated teachers, appears appropriate to and for the most part adequate for meeting the needs of failure syndrome students. It is particularly adequate from the standpoint of efficacy training, because although none of the teachers were familiar with this term and its associated

scholarly literature, most of them intuitively were using the strategies that Schunk (1985) and others have stressed in efficacy training programs (negotiating agreement that the student will strive to meet specific proximal goals, giving feedback that stresses that the student has the ability to succeed if he or she invests reasonable effort). The modal response appears less satisfactory from the standpoint of attribution retraining and remediation of learned helplessness, because most teachers confined their interventions to a combination of support, encouragement, and instructional assistance specific to the task at hand, without doing or even saying much about the students' learned helplessness symptoms (catastrophic reactions to frustration, attribution of failure to lack of ability, giving up quickly). In particular, there was very little mention of either the use of modeling to teach better coping strategies or the need to teach the student how to persist in the face of frustration or difficulty (rather than merely programming the student for success). In short, even the higher rated teachers tended to confine their intervention to a strategy of shaping improvement through success experiences, without also speaking of using modeling and controlled experiences with failure in order to counteract learned helplessness tendencies and develop more adaptive responses to failure in addition to increased expectancies for success.

It is possible, of course, that the individualized support and assistance that the teachers would give to their failure syndrome students would include modeling of adaptive response to failure, attribution retraining, and other strategies that have been developed by Dweck and others for reversing learned helplessness problems. If so, however, even the teachers who would use such strategies probably would not do so very consciously or systematically (because they did not mention them to us). It appears, then, that the scope and effectiveness of the strategies for responding to failure syndrome students that teachers tend to develop intuitively through classroom experience could be

augmented significantly by exposing them to the literature on self-efficacy training and attribution retraining as responses to learned helplessness problems.

In contrast, certain aspects of the teachers' modal response are worth noting because they go beyond the methods developed by psychologists for treating learned helplessness problems, and in particular, do so in ways that take advantage of the continuing role-based relationship that teachers share with their students (a relationship that experimenters do not share with subjects in their experiments). Helping the students to meet curricular goals is basic to the teacher's role, and the teacher can exert control over both the difficulty of the work assigned to students and the availability and intensity of the extra help they receive when they attempt to do the work. This puts teachers in a position not only to offer instruction or modeling in better coping strategies and give feedback designed to make sure that failure syndrome students understand that they have the ability to handle the work, but also to reassure them that they will give them work that they can handle in the first place and will provide whatever task assistance they need if they run into trouble and are unable to solve the problem through their own persistent efforts.

Assuming that the teacher has the student's trust and follows through on whatever is promised, such reassurances constitute a credible personal commitment and a powerful supplement to the kinds of relatively impersonal strategies suggested by the literature on learned helplessness. In fact, teachers are often in a position to "create reality" for younger students or students who are just beginning to develop failure syndrome problems--to combine the credibility that comes with good personal relationships with students and the authority that comes with the teacher role in order to show and tell failure syndrome students how they should perceive and respond to performance demand situations.

Such teachers may be able to short circuit what otherwise might be a long slow process by simply forcefully informing failure syndrome students that they have been misinterpreting the situation and telling them how they should interpret and respond to it in the future. An important limitation on this approach, however, is that it depends heavily on the teacher's credibility and personal relationship with the student, so that whatever improvements it produces might not generalize to other classrooms or other performance demand situations (as recognized by many of the teachers and evidenced in their attributional inference data).

In summary, although teachers have not been exposed to the research literature on failure syndrome students, most of them develop through experience a set of perceptions about the nature and causes of failure syndrome problems, as well as a set of strategies for coping with these problems, that as far as they go reflect the major research findings. Teachers' effectiveness with their failure syndrome students would probably be enhanced, however, if they were taught to use modeling to teach these students better coping strategies, especially techniques for persisting in the face of frustration or failure.

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Appendix

Selected Excerpts from Transcripts

This appendix contains excerpts from the raw data (e.g., the transcripts of the teachers' interview and vignette responses), selected to show representative examples of apparently more effective and apparently less effective responses.

I. Interview Responses

A. A More Effective Example

These children have been told or have learned in some manner that they are not able to do the work. So first I would talk with them about facets of the problem that I have observed and see what they have to say about them. Then I would find out why they are having feelings like this. Many times children are not able to discuss their feelings, other than to simply say, "I can't do this problem." But finding out areas where they do have competencies, where they do feel that they can succeed. Specific strategies might then include taking areas that they feel they can meet some successes in and sitting down with them to set goals. Initially, very simple goals, so that it might take only five minutes for them to complete a task and then have them immediately rewarded, such as with a star on the paper. Gradually, as the days go on, building each goal so that at the end of the week then we can have another conference and actually see the successes that were met. I think in the long run, any time you get a child to sit down and actually help contract a problem area you meet far more successes than if you impose these goals on them yourself without them having any say-so in the matter. If this method of dealing with the child is not successful, I would probably call in the parents and find out what is happening in the home. Oftentimes a child like this, if the problem is severe enough, needs to have some kind of school counseling. We have a school social worker who, if her caseload isn't too great, will come in and help us out in a matter like this. A strategy that never works with a child like this is to just say, "Oh, you know you can do it; just go back to your seat and do it," without talking to them about the parts that they can't do and without giving them goals.

B. A More Effective Example

These children need a lot of praise and encouragement. I don't think you can talk them into working just by saying that something is easy; you have to feel it through with them. They are a very hard group to work with because you have to be so patient. It's a very slow process and with these children I try not to hurry, not to apply too much pressure, but to try to work things through with them. Sometimes just give them a limited amount of work to do, and set very small goals. Maybe we'll plan to work 15 minutes and see what they can get accomplished in 15 minutes. Sometimes they do need easier work. You really need to know what their background is: what kinds of problems they might have at home or in the classroom (if somebody has always put them down or not given them the chance to work something themselves). It's easy for a teacher to try to do things for this type of child and not let them be successful on their own. . . . It's important of course to make them feel successful; whenever they do something successfully to say, "Yes, this is right," and "You're doing a fine job." Usually I like to start with a child that way and sometimes I will get another child to work with them. A child that works well with other children, that is reinforcing, that will be patient, that will just try to help them understand. And, I have had quite a few instances where this

has worked well. And it has gotten the child, you know, to have a special kind of friend. This has bolstered their ego, too, and made them feel like, "With someone encouraging me and if they think I can do it, I guess I really can do it." But I think you have to give them small amounts of work at a time so that they don't look over something and say, "Oh, it's way overwhelming, it's too much." Another thing is to say, "How many problems do you think you can do today?" Because most generally they don't have to do a whole page in order to show their knowledge. And let them make some choices of "Well, I think I can do five problems and do them successfully." Or, start out and increase. I think it's very important, too, when they do finish, to put a star on their paper or give them some other immediate reinforcement that they can take home, that they can show to somebody else that will really make them proud. . . . These children need to know that you're always there, that they can come to you for help if they do become frustrated. Maybe you can't help right at that moment, but you can say, "I want to help you, let's plan some time where we can work quietly together." Lots of times I have stayed after school to help and I know children appreciate it. They become more frustrated when they need your help right then and you can't give it to them. If you can just say, "Why don't you put that away right now and let's do it when we're alone when I can give you my full attention." This close contact, with them knowing that they have your support and that you're not going to be angry with them, that you're going to be patient with them, this works best in the long run. Rewards can work well for awhile, but it's your relationship with the child that's most important in the long run.

C. A Less Effective Example

(This teacher had trouble talking about failure syndrome motivational problems separately from limited ability problems).

These children have been convinced that they can't do a good job. Evidently it has been going on for a period of time. They have a low self-concept. I would start off by evaluating them to be sure that they can handle the work that I am trying to give them. I would work with them or see that they have other supervision at least to get started. I'd give a lot of praise for all of the success they have accomplished and I would cut their work into small amounts so that they can have success. . . . I would talk with them, I would encourage them, I'd say, "You can handle it, you have the ability and I'm sure you don't feel good being behind and you have a chance to bring yourself up, why don't you get busy." I might even try some rewards. It could be a verbal reward, or it could be a treat or something. Maybe a few extra minutes for games or some drawing time or some time to do nothing if they want.

II. Vignette Responses

A. Vignette A vs. Vignette B Contrasts

The following are one teacher's responses to Vignettes A and B, included here to show typical similarities and differences in the responses that these two vignettes elicited.

Vignette A (Joe). "Why don't we go back to your seat or you can come up to my desk and let's look at the assignment together to see which parts of it you feel are too hard." We would go over it together and he would maybe point out three or four items that might be too difficult for him. At that point, I

would take an item and say, "Okay, let's read this together and find out what information you do know about this item." I would go through the assignment with him and have him start out with those parts that he would be able to do, and work right with him until he at least met success in that. When the child and I had gone through and done one or two things on the page that he was able to do on his own, if it was math for instance, I would have him select about 6 to 10 problems that he thought that he could do on his own. Then he would go back to his seat and do them. I would praise him at the end of that for what he had done, not necessarily for the items that he hadn't done until then. . . . His self-concept is so poor that if I get angry at him, it just reinforces the idea in his own mind that he is actually stupid, even though he isn't. Until he can see where he can meet successes, he isn't going to do anything anyway. And so, I guess the idea is to begin by having him produce at a minimal level and then gradually build it up day after day.

Vignette B (Mary). "Mary, in looking over your assignment, it appears that you're not finished and that you really need to go back and take a look at all the items that you have skipped. What seems to be your difficulty with these? Are these items that you have no idea what the answers are, or are they ones that you just skimmed over and didn't feel like answering, or are they ones that perhaps you just didn't see?" At this point, I would have her go back to her seat and if she did have any questions on them, make sure that she asked. If she turned it in again and still wasn't finished, I would have her go item by item and ask new questions on them as far as what the difficulty was in doing them. . . . She needs to have a paper that is complete at the end, otherwise she will turn in every paper without items completed. Since Mary has the intelligence to succeed, and it appears that she needs a lot of extra help, I might schedule an after school session with her, not as a disciplinary measure or punishment, but at that point, I would sit down with her and actually go through the assignment completely with her and be working on my own papers side by side, at her desk, and every time she comes to a point where she can't handle something, then I would insist that she ask questions on it.

B. More Effective Examples

The following are examples of some of the more effective responses to these two vignettes.

Vignette A. My objective first would be to raise Joe's self-concept and try to get him to have enough self-pride to try assignments that he thinks might be too hard for him. I would concentrate on the pride angle, praising Joe for whatever good he did, and stressing that he had to do more and giving him the individual help to see that he did more work each day until he completed assignments without dawdling. So number one, for a day Joe would have to be the center of my attention. As soon as the lesson is introduced to the group, I would see that Joe understood the assignment in the first place, put his name on the paper, and got started. If there was a title to be written, "You didn't write the title of the lesson (or the date or whatever the heading was to be)." When he did it, give him some praise. "That's very good. Now, how did we say that we would do the example?" Have Joe do another example. While the rest of the class understood the example and are working, Joe is pretending that he can't, so let's do another example. "I'm going to help you." If Joe still seems confused, we would do another example. Maybe for the first few days, Joe would need my help. If with my help he got half of the job done that the rest of his group was completing, he should feel better about

himself in a few days and then would go on and attempt to finish an assignment. When he got a part of it done I would always have a mark that I would give him saying that you're getting better, and I would use that kind of a stamp to do this. The kind that says, "You've tried, keep on trying." A happy face saying "Better today." If he didn't complete it, a stamp that said "Incomplete" but with a little note. All of the notes would be positive rather than a lot of marks that would be depressing and defeating to a child who is having problems even though he has the ability and could be a capable student. I feel that a positive approach with, like, "You only got half of it done today Joe, but tomorrow we're going to see if we can do two-thirds of it, because you can do it. I like what you did today." My comments would be that rather than letter grades; some positive comments showing him what is good and what he needs to work on. Saying, "This is much better than yesterday." This kind of thing, from my experience, helps Joe to know that I'm concerned, not that he gets the 100% or the A like Andy over here always does, but "I'm pleased that you are making progress, aren't you? We did better because I helped you. I want to see if you can tell me what I said, and show me. If you don't understand I'll help you again." Then when we get a certain amount done. "Now see if you can finish it." Give him the positive comments then, the grading that would be Joe's and my grading system. He's making progress rather than have Joe compete with the class and feel defeated right off and say "I can't do that stuff, it's too hard for me." "It's not too hard for you and if you work a little harder and with my help, and it's my job to help you, we're going to get it." I feel that that child would soon stop complaining and dawdling and would begin to do a little more because he feels that I am watching his progress as an individual and letting him know that he's growing and he should see growth after a few days. He should feel that he is capable which he is.

Vignette B. Mary needs a lot of encouragement. Even though she gets through her work somehow, she is frustrated, she's disgusted and she easily gives up. Well, this is a sign that she is not really understanding what she is doing, so one of the ways I could handle this, I could first give her a lot of encouragement. Try to get her to feel better about herself. Try to get her to feel that she can achieve. At the moment, it appears that her feeling is "I can't do it." I might even say to her the very words, "Mary, you can do it." Then I will go through enough of the work to allow her to feel that she understands how to go ahead with it. She might not, but I will go through enough of it so she will feel that she can. Then, it is likely that Mary is going to come to me many times, but I am not going to let her become dependent on me. I am going to say, "Mary, you must think for yourself," and I am going to give her an opportunity to do that. If she gets stuck on something where she just can't handle it, then I will go and give her assistance. But, I am not going to let her become totally dependent on me. That won't help her any. I am going to do enough for her to give her something to begin with and from there we will work, trying to give her self-confidence and the belief that she can do it.

C. Less Effective Examples

The following are examples of some of the less effective responses to these two vignettes.

Vignette A. "What grade level are you working at, Joe? Do you think you can do the work at this grade level? Are you really trying to do the work?" Joe probably lacks self-motivation more than anything. I would expect him to

be able to do sixth grade work. Remember, we're talking about someone who is capable of doing the work. We're not talking about someone who isn't capable, so someone who is incapable would have to be dealt with differently. In other words I would have to be sarcastic if I had to go down to a lower level of work with Joe. I would say, "Okay, then I'll put you back in fifth grade and we'll see what you're gonna do with fifth grade work.". . . . Motivation is not there. A lazy streak is probably one of the worst things that many teachers cope with. They don't want to work unless someone gives them the answer. Joe is typical of that.

Vignette A. I would say to Joe, "Do the first one for me. That's all you have to do is the first one." I would give him the paper then. My rationale is that if I could get him to do the first one, then later on I could get him to come back and do more. My goal is to get him to complete the paper. To show him he can do it.

Vignette B. "Mary, I see that you still have some problems here that you did not finish. Why did you skip them? You couldn't do them? I know you could do them Mary. Come on, let's try. I'll help you. If you need help, I'll help you. Okay?" The reason I did this is because Mary can do the work but she gets frustrated easily and my goal is to get her not to be frustrated but to come to me for help if she can't do it on her own. She is the type of student who gives up very easily.

Vignette B. I'd just tell Mary to return to her desk and complete the ones that she wasn't able to do. If she suffers from defeatism and you constantly promote it, she's never going to overcome the idea that she can't do it. The way you promote it is to allow her to return the paper without doing the work. She's never going to overcome the idea that she can't do it if she's not made to do it, so she has to do it. Her ability level is there and she has no excuses.